INFORMATION MANAGEMENT ELECTRONIC NEWS LETTER

"Improving Customer Awareness through better Communications"

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Project Management Information System (PROMIS) II - A New System and Approach to Project Management

The Corps has embarked on a new initiative to redefine how it will address its project management requirements. The approach used presently is one more functional than project centric. This approach does not promote the "One Door to the Corps" concept that is needed to institutionalize a seamless customer-focused organization across the Corps. The new approach will address this "Paradigm Shift" in project management with one that promotes the Chief's Vision. It customer-focused, results oriented, and built on sound technical and management capabilities.

A critical component used to manage and maintain Corps projects and programs is an automated system called PROMIS. This system developed by the government is used to support program management tracking and reporting requirements. The system interfaces with CEFMS for financial reporting and PPDS for summary reporting to USACE.

To address this new direction and set of requirements dealing with Project Management, the existing system falls short of meeting our corporate needs. PROMIS is somewhat inflexible in its design and would require a major redesign to meet our existing as well as projected corporate requirements, i.e. Virtual Teams, Sharing Real-Time Information with our Clients, Support Regional Business Center's business needs, etc. Due to the shortcomings of the existing system the Corps has elected to acquire a commercial-off-the-shelf product to replace PROMIS. The system will probably follow the same path as our newly acquired contracting system - SPS, which is a COTS and is modified to meet the government needs.
As the Corps moves further down range on this initiative we will provide you with additional information.

Information Technology Investment Portfolio System (ITIPS) Information Management Planning and Implementation Tool

What is ITIPS?

The Information Technology Investment Portfolio System (ITIPS) is a Federally mandated system which is responsible for monitoring the planning, acquisition and operations processes related to Automated Information Systems (AIS) and Information Technology (IT) investments. The ITIPS database is a repository of information about the Corps of Engineers' Information Technology programs. This currently includes Automated Information Systems, Programs, Communications, Office Automation, Automated Engineering Tools, Support to Standard Systems, General Purpose Data Processing, Facilities Modernization, Records Management Modernization, Visual Information Support, Library Modernization, Printing and Publishing Modernization, Technology Integration, Information Technology Infrastructure, and other IT classifications. The system is a detailed planning and budget system for the current 3 year budget cycle; i.e. Approved, Requested, and Planned and for projected out years. Detailed information about ITIPS can be found in the Guidance and Definitions for The Information Technology Investment Portfolio System .

How is this system used?

ITIPS Provides:

* Create "information technology architectures" as guides for strategic and operational IT planning.

* Establish a "capital planning and investment control" plan to reduce ill-conceived spending on information technology.

* Develop an "information Resource Management plan" capable of analyzing IT investments to ensure they work toward achieving the agency's overall mission and goals.

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* Meet information technology needs through intra-agency and interagency sharing, before buying new equipment.

* Create a "portfolio" that monitors agency IT investments to avoid redundancy and examine alternative options.

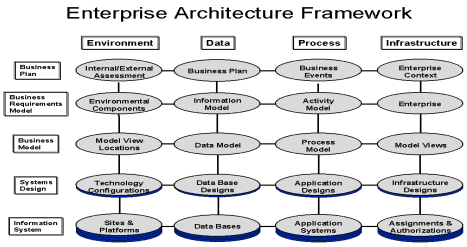
ITIPS generates an IT initiative *number* required by CEFMS on PR&Cs containing IT resources and or services. *Why are we doing this?* As mentioned above, this is a DOD requirement which is an integral part of the system used by Headquarters, Corps of Engineers as input to the IT Capital Planning and Investment Decision process . The system provides the ability to enter detailed budget information and generate an IT investment portfolio report for all Corps organizations. An IT Investment Portfolio supports the decision process for selecting , evaluating, and controlling IT investments. Additional information can be found in the IT Capital Planning and Investment Decision Process document.

Improper Use of Government Resources - Idle Hands are the Devil's Playground. –

Across the government there is an increasing amount of reported cases dealing with improper use of government resources. Cases dealing with individuals running personal businesses from Government offices, persons visiting pornographic web sites and printing / storing offensive material on government resources.

Recently, the Center experienced several cases of its own where individuals were caught visiting adult web sites using Government computers. Individuals are reminded the Command has zero tolerance for this type of conduct in the work place. In every case the individuals involved were officially reprimanded and sent home for a period of time with no pay.

Again, the automation and communications resources used in the Center belong to the Government and are paid for by the taxpayers. If you have any questions pertaining to the proper use of government resources please see your supervisor or contact IM.



Data Management – Information that serves You!

In a normal workday an employee in the Center will access several systems to conduct their business. Either the information is being entered into or extracted from a multitude of systems. Many times we are called upon to pull together information from these systems for reporting as well as decision making. One of the challenges we are confronted with is how to leverage both the information as well as the technology to enhance our business processes and decision making capabilities.

The government as well as the private sector have and continue to embraced information warehousing as a means for managing and leveraging their corporate data.

What is an Information Warehouse? An "Information Warehouse" is a collection of computer-based information that is critical to successful execution of enterprise initiatives. An information warehouse is more than an archive for corporate data and more than a new way of accessing corporate data. An information warehouse is a subject-oriented repository designed with enterprise-wide access in mind. It provides tools to satisfy the information needs of enterprise managers at all organizational levels — not just for complex data queries, but as a general facility for getting quick, accurate, and rich information. An information warehouse is designed so that users can recognize the information they want and access that information using simple tools.

An information warehouse is a blending of technologies, including relational and multidimensional databases,

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graphical user interfaces and more. Operational (legacy) systems create, update and delete production data that "feed" the information warehouse. The principal reason for developing an information warehouse is to integrate operational data from various sources into a single and consistent architecture that supports analysis and decision-making within the enterprise.

For those enterprises that believe information is a valuable resource, an information warehouse is analogous to a physical warehouse. Operational systems create data "parts" that are loaded into the warehouse. Some of those parts are summarized into information "components" and stored in the warehouse. Information warehouse users make requests and are delivered information "products" that are created from the components and parts stored in the warehouse.
A well-defined and properly implemented information warehouse can be a valuable competitive tool.

Information Warehouse Benefits

Implementing an information warehouse provides significant benefits -- many tangible, some intangible.

More cost-effective decision making. An information warehouse allows reduction of staff and computer resources required to support queries and reports against operational and production databases. This typically offers significant savings. Having an information warehouse also eliminates the resource drain on production systems when executing long-running, complex queries and reports.

Better enterprise intelligence. Increased quality and flexibility of enterprise analysis arises from the multi-tiered data structures of an information warehouse that supports data ranging from detailed transactional level to high-level summary information. Guaranteed data accuracy and reliability results from ensuring that an information warehouse contains only "trusted" data.

Enhanced customer service. An enterprise can maintain better customer relationships by correlating all customer data via a single information warehouse architecture.

Business reengineering. Allowing unlimited analysis of enterprise information often provides insights into enterprise processes that may yield breakthrough ideas for reengineering those processes. Just defining the requirements for an information warehouse results in better enterprise goals and measures. Knowing what information is important to an enterprise will provide direction and priority for reengineering efforts.

Information system reengineering. An information warehouse that is based upon enterprise-wide data requirements provides a cost-effective means of establishing both data standardization and operational system interoperability. Information warehouse development can be an effective first step in reengineering

Blueprint for an Information Warehouse: Engineering an information warehouse is a lot like engineering a physical warehouse. Both involve a development cycle and require the right tools.

A building is constructed using architectural diagrams (blueprints) that clearly depict the building's infrastructure (structural elements, walls, electrical wiring, plumbing, etc.). Information warehouses are built from architectural models of enterprise infrastructure (policies, goals, measures, critical success factors, etc.).
Blueprints are also used to enlarge a building or make any significant modifications. Without a diagram of the infrastructure, such changes are quite difficult and very costly. It is the same with information warehouses. First updates to the enterprise's architecture model is done so that it reflects changes (new product lines or services, for example) and then modifies the information warehouse to support the changed enterprise.

Information warehouse engineering is easier and less costly when based upon an accurate architectural model of the enterprise. Further, an information warehouse is easier to use and consistently produces desired outcomes when decision-makers have access to an enterprise architecture that accurately reflects enterprise infrastructure.

The enterprise is ultimately responsible for ensuring that their information warehouse is developed, implemented and becomes an enterprise asset. Management provides the guidance and expertise that allows the enterprise to develop a superior information warehouse effectively and efficiently.

A corporate approach to information warehouse development results in a useable, effective information management tool that meets the needs of an enterprise, business or government, large or small. A well-defined information warehouse, properly implemented, can be a valuable tool for the entire enterprise.

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In the next newsletter we will discuss what efforts are on going to take the first steps towards data / information warehousing for the Center.

IT Jargon – Terms that are common when dealing with Data Warehousing!

Data Management: Controlling, protecting, and facilitating access to data in order to provide information consumers with timely access to the data they need. The functions provided by a database management system.

Data Mining: A technique using software tools geared for the user who typically does not know exactly what he's searching for, but is looking for particular patterns or trends. Data mining is the process of sifting through large amounts of data to produce data content relationships. This is also known as data surfing.

Information: Data that has been processed in such a way that it can increase the knowledge of the person who receives it. Information is the output, or finished goods, of information systems. Information is also what individuals start with before it is fed into a Data Capture transaction processing system.

Information Consumer: A person or software service that uses data to create information.

Information Systems Architecture: The authoritative definition of the business rules, systems structure, technical framework, and product backbone for business information systems. An information systems architecture consists of four layers: business architecture, systems architecture, technical architecture, and product architecture.

Operational Database: The database-of-record, consisting of system-specific reference data and event data belonging to a transaction-update system. It may also contain system control data such as indicators, flags, and counters. The operational database is the source of data for the data warehouse. It contains detailed data used to run the day-to-day operations of the business. The data continually changes as updates are made, and reflect the current value of the last transaction.

Suggestions

If you would like to make a suggestion on how we can improve our services or would like to make a suggestion on ways to improve this letter please fill out our suggestion form. Click here